

City of Cambridge
Community Development Department
**Allowing Multifamily Housing
Citywide**

Planning Board Discussion
March 15, 2022





Tonight's Discussion

- Recap earlier discussions
- Discuss Zoning **Principles**:
 - *Is there agreement?*
 - *What could be changed?*
- Discuss Zoning **Concepts**:
 - *Are these the right concepts to study?*
 - *Should other concepts be included?*
- Discuss Zoning **Options**:
 - *Which might be pursued?*
 - *Which should not be pursued?*



Recap

Allowing Multifamily Citywide

City Council Policy Order (recommended 11/16):

Work with the Planning Board to develop **concepts** and **principles** to eliminate single family and two family only zones

Planning Board Discussions (so far):

- January 4, 2022 – Background Information, Potential Approaches
- January 18, 2022 – Envision Framework



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Planning Board Discussion – Goals and Benefits

- A more fair city, not more exclusive in some areas than others
- No reason to exclude multifamily housing, most neighborhoods already have a variety of housing types
- Encourage creation of more housing units – more opportunities in more parts of the city
- Multifamily housing in Cambridge and other transit-served communities serves broader environmental goals
- Statewide, regional policies encourage multifamily housing



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Planning Board Discussion – Issues and Concerns

- New market-rate housing will be high-cost, wealthier households
- Increased property values if more development is allowed
- Preserving private open space (backyards) and tree canopy
- Balance between accommodating families with children and higher cost of larger homes
- Competition for residential on-street parking
- Architectural character of neighborhoods, avoiding teardowns
- Unintended consequences



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Planning Board Discussion – Zoning Approaches

- Change standards in current districts, rather than a complete rezoning
- Aim for incremental, not wholesale change
- Some things can be advanced sooner (e.g., allowing more use types, housing units); others will need more study and discussion (e.g., setbacks, parking)
- Some issues will need non-zoning strategies as well – e.g., affordability will need subsidies, &c.

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What have other places done?

Minneapolis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2-family, 3-family homes allowed in districts formerly restricted to single-family (effective 1/1/2021)• Minneapolis Fed to analyze outcomes (dashboard)
Berkeley	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Voted to remove single-family zoning in 2021• To be implemented through general plan (2-year process)
Oregon	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2019 legislation requires cities to allow non-single-family housing types, depending on size
California	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2021 legislation requires cities to allow 4-unit development, division of lots (w/limitations)
Massachusetts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2021 “MBTA communities” legislation requires transit-served areas to permit multifamily housing of at least 15 units/acre



Zoning Principles and Concepts



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Things to remember about zoning:

- Fundamentally: What is prohibited where, and why?
- What are the values that determine what the City allows in some areas, but prohibits in others?
- What should change if the status quo does not reflect the City's values today?



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Zoning Principles (for discussion)

- Allow an **equitable range of housing types and unit sizes** in all residential districts – i.e., no districts limited only to large, single/two-family homes
- Allow **additional housing units** in restrictive zoning districts, to create more housing opportunities in those areas
- Balance the benefit of **allowing more units** with concerns about **increases in building size**, which could increase property values
- Encourage **preservation of existing building stock** where it's valued

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Zoning Concepts (for discussion):

What is necessary to enable multifamily housing in A-1, A-2, B districts?

Allowing More Housing Types (use)

- Current zoning limited to single detached unit on a lot (A), two-family or townhouse development (B)
- Subdivision is constrained by lot sizes
- **What range of housing types should be allowed?**

Allowing More Units per Acre (lot area per dwelling unit)

- More restrictive districts allow larger buildings with fewer units
- **What changes would allow the creation of more units in the same floor area?**

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What other concepts might be considered?

Adjust Parking Requirements

- Ongoing process looking at parking requirements more broadly, along with other parking and transportation policies and regulations

Adjust Dimensional Standards

- Design study needed to test balance among housing, environmental, and urban design goals

Increase Density Near Transit

- Most of Cambridge served by transit, major transit hubs mostly zoned higher-density mixed-use
- Additional analysis could inform a potential rezoning

Change Affordability Requirements

- Current zoning has “voluntary inclusionary” incentives
- Needs careful legal and economic scrutiny
- Next review of inclusionary policy in 2022



Concept 1: Allowing More Housing Types

Allowing More Housing Types

What's allowed now *in Res. A-1, A-2, B, C, C-1:*



1,250 (+/-) square feet



3,000 (+/-) square feet



6,000 (+/-) square feet

← “Detached” (Single-Family) Housing →

Other housing types – **NOT ALLOWED in Res. A, ALLOWED in Res. B, C, C-1:**



← Two-family →

Rowhouses

Other housing types – **NOT ALLOWED in Res. A or Res. B, ALLOWED in Res. C, C-1:**



3 units



6 units



18 units

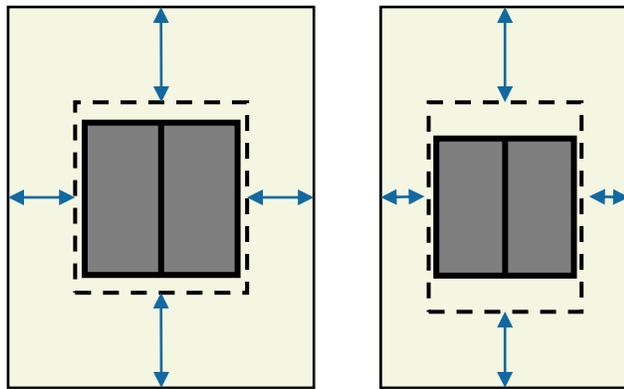


Group housing
(e.g., Lodging House)

← Multifamily →

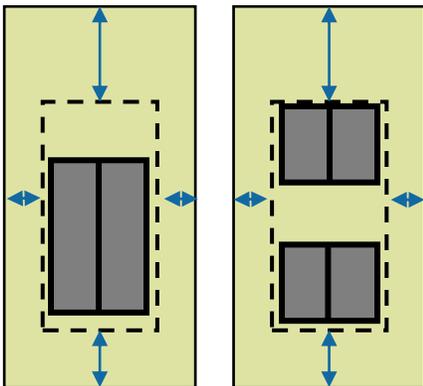
Allowing More Housing Types

What's allowed now:



Residence A-1, A-2

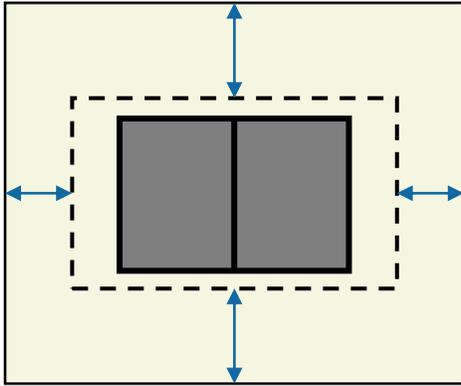
- Detached dwellings only
- Lots below a certain size can't be subdivided
- One principal structure per lot



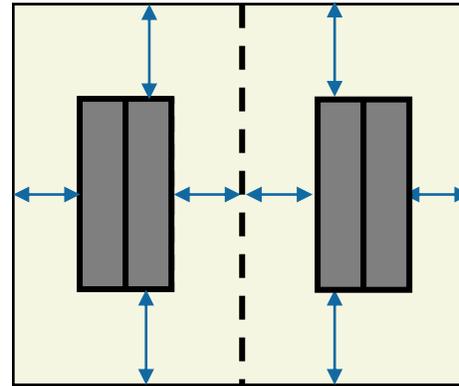
Residence B

- Detached, two-family, townhouse
- Lots < 10,000 SF in area or < 100 feet wide can't be subdivided
- Multiple structures per lot, **special permit** if second structure is > 75 feet from street

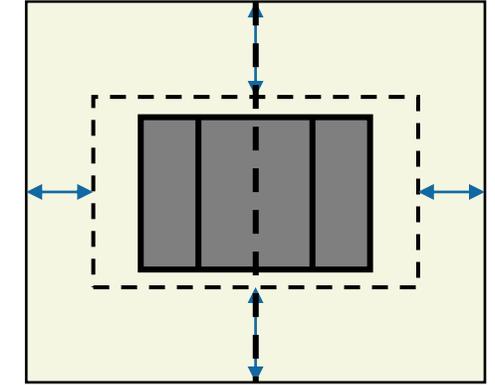
Site development options:



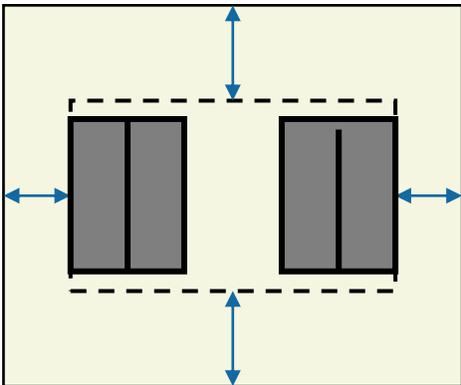
Current standards prevent subdivision in Res. A-1, A-2



Detached subdivision



Townhouse subdivision



Multiple dwellings per lot

Considerations:

- Allowing multiple structures can provide infill opportunities without altering existing buildings
- Larger multi-unit buildings can result in more efficient development, usable open space, and/or consistency with neighborhood development patterns

Allowing More Housing Types

Options for Allowed Uses in Res. A-1, A-2, B

Allow conversions of existing buildings to multifamily housing

Allow a limited range of multifamily housing
(e.g., 3-unit buildings, 6-unit buildings)

Allow all multifamily housing

Allow multifamily and group housing (same as Res. C, C-1)

Options for Allowed Site Development

Maintain standards to encourage fewer, larger buildings on a lot

Change standards to allow subdivision and/or multiple building development



Concept 2: Allowing More Units per Acre

Allowing More Units per Acre

What's allowed now:



District	Max. Height	Max. FAR	Min. Lot Area/Unit	Optimized GFA/Unit Range	Net Units/Acre Range
A-1	35 feet	0.50	6,000 SF	3,000-6,000 SF	3.6-7.3
A-2	35 feet	0.50	4,500 SF	2,250-4,500 SF	4.8-9.7
B	35 feet	0.50(-)*	2,500(+) SF*	1,250-2,500 SF	8.7-17.4*
C	35 feet	0.60	1,800 SF	1,080-2,160 SF	12.1-24.2
C-1	35 feet	0.75	1,500 SF	1,125-2,250 SF	14.5-29.0

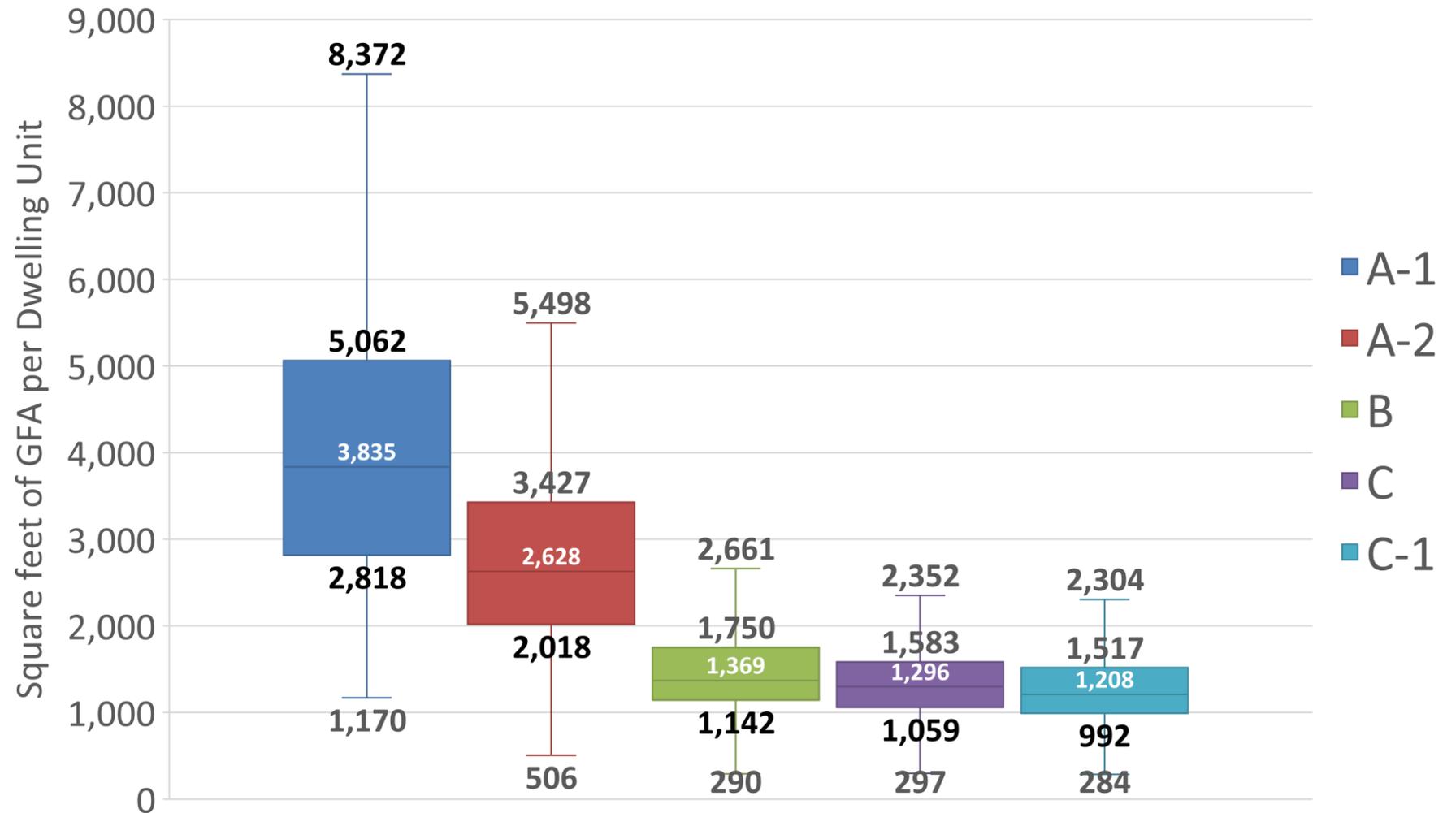
*2,500 SF lot area /unit and 0.50 FAR for the first 5,000 SF of lot area,
4,000 SF lot area/unit and 0.35 FAR for lot area over 5,000 SF

Allowing More Units per Acre

*What are typical
GFA/unit ratios?*

*Source: Cambridge
Assessing
Department*

**NOTE: ALL FIGURES
APPROXIMATE**



Allowing More Units per Acre

Options for Changing Units per Acre Rules

Reduce minimum L.A./D.U. for a consistent GFA/unit ratio across districts
(e.g., calibrate to 1,000-2,000 SF of GFA per unit)

Eliminate minimum L.A./D.U., limit number of units based on GFA/FAR

Eliminate all limits on units per acre, keep other controls
(e.g., limits on building types, number of buildings, height/size, lot coverage)

Create a **minimum units per acre** standard
(limit reductions in number of units, enlargements without adding units)



Next Steps



Further Study

Based on preferred Concepts/Options:

- Existing Conditions Analysis: Potential effects across the city, map areas where changes would be more likely
- Design: Look at example lots, potential building and site design outcomes
- Economics: Look at example lots, potential effects on development value, property value, home prices (note whether any increase in property value would potentially impact affordable housing opportunities)
- Planning Goals: Evaluate options according to Envision Cambridge metrics of livability, diversity & equity, economic opportunity, sustainability & resilience, community health & wellbeing, learning



Discussion

- Discuss Zoning **Principles** (±15 mins):
 - *Is there agreement?*
 - *What could be changed?*
- Discuss Zoning **Concepts** (±15 mins):
 - *Are these the right concepts to study?*
 - *Should other concepts be included?*
- Discuss Zoning **Options** (±30 mins total):
 - *Which might be pursued?*
 - *Which should not be pursued?*

Questions before starting?